

LAKE COUNTY



▪ PUBLIC LIBRARY ▪

STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2026

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STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2026

APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES JANUARY 2022

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VISION STATEMENT

Connecting our diverse communities through access to information, ideas, and resources.

MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of the Lake County Public Library (LCPL) is to provide the highest quality informational, educational, cultural, and recreational resources and services to the diverse communities in the Lake County Public Library district.

CORE VALUES

INTEGRITY

LCPL seeks to act with integrity in all its endeavors. The Library acts as a responsible steward of public resources, protects the privacy of its patrons, and seeks to provide the most accurate information through its collections, resources, and programming.

SERVICE EXCELLENCE

LCPL strives to provide unbiased, accurate, and outstanding service to all individuals.

DIVERSITY

LCPL recognizes and values all the ways in which people differ, both seen and unseen, while embracing all the characteristics that make one individual or group different from or the same as another. LCPL fosters an environment in which everyone is treated fairly and all are valued; and maintains collections, and services that reflect this.

ACCESS

The Library works to provide physical and comprehensive access to its buildings, its collections, and its programming; and actively listens and responds to the expressed needs and concerns of its communities.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

The Lake County Public Library System (LCPL) is the third largest library system in the state.

LCPL serves the communities that reside in the school districts of Griffith Public Schools, Hanover Community School Corporation, School Town of Highland, School City of Hobart, Lake Central School Corporation, Lake Ridge Schools, Lake Station Community Schools, Merrillville Community School Corporation, School Town of Munster, and River Forest Community School Corporation with nine buildings.

The number of households for the service area in 2000 was 81,920 and changed to 93,148 in 2010, representing a change of 13.7%. The household count in 2021 was 94,083 and the household projection for 2026 is 96,223, a change of 2.3%.

The population in the service area in 2000 was 217,251 and in 2010 it was 242,800, an 11.8% increase. The population in 2021 was 244,143 and the projection for 2026 is 247,972 representing a change of 1.6%.

Lake County is divided into seven independent library districts. The number of households (Lake County) in 2000 was 181,653 and changed to 188,157 in 2010, representing a change of 3.6%. The household count in 2021 was 187,180 and the household projection for 2026 is 189,496, a change of 1.2%.

The population (Lake County) in 2000 was 484,610 and in 2010 it was 496,008, roughly a 2.4% change. The population in 2021 was 491,511 and the projection for 2026 is 494,548 representing a change of 0.6%.

Since Lake County Public Library participates in the Statewide Reciprocal Borrowing Covenant, library cardholders throughout the county have access to our collections as do other library cardholders throughout the state.

The Library maintains a close relationship with schools in its district and offers tours, class visits, bibliographic instruction, and digital access library cards for their students. Area colleges and regional university campuses often tour the Merrillville Branch and make use of the library's resources.

Through technology, innovative programming, outstanding customer service, and a well-trained and motivated staff, the Lake County Public Library continues to adapt and offer its patrons quality library services and resources.

More detailed demographics are included in Appendix A.

FOUNDATION

To ensure that Lake County Public Library would be able to sustain library resources, the Lake County Public Library Foundation, an independent, non-profit organization, was established in 1984.

The Foundation administers funds received and provides a continuing source of income for LCPL. The philanthropic endeavors of individuals and corporations help to subsidize the Library, enabling it to fulfill its mission for quality library service.

The Lake County Public Library Foundation is the catalyst in generating public funding and endowments to ensure the future and excellence of Lake County Public Library. The majority of the Foundation's funds is held in an endowment which ensures these funds will benefit the library's future indefinitely. Gifts received help increase the Foundation's endowment, or donors can direct their use specifically. The Foundation is the primary financial supporter of the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library at LCPL.

FRIENDS OF LCPL

The Friends of Lake County Public Library is comprised of volunteers who work countless hours sorting, shelving and selling books at the LCPL book sale room at Merrillville Branch and at sale racks at all branch locations. The funds are distributed for youth and adult programming and for volunteer and staff recognition events. With the Friends support, Lake County Public Library is able to fulfill the mission of quality library service.

VOLUNTEERS

The volunteers are an important part of the Lake County Public Library family. Thanks to volunteers, LCPL is able to go above and beyond the library services provided by public funding.

Volunteers allow us to offer a variety of classes thanks to their expertise, provide ESL literacy tutoring, assist in the Indiana and Genealogy Rooms, and so much more. In March 2020 our volunteer program was paused due to the health emergency but in the last half of 2021 volunteers have begun returning to our branches.

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY NEEDS

In order to assess community needs and goals, the Lake County Public Library reviewed census data using Gale Analytics, the United State Census Bureau, and the Indiana Department of Education data; conducted a Public Input Survey; and received input from Library employees.

CENSUS RESULTS

Summary data reflect the diversity and disparities within the communities served by the Lake County Public Library district.

When categorized by race and ethnicity our school districts are very diverse. Based on current 2026 projections the average district racial makeup will be 77.2% white and 10.7% Black/African American. Based on the 2019 census data, the white population percentage varies widely between school district, with a range of 50.7% to 93.0%. Black/African American varies from .6% to 35.8% with the average in the service area being 11.4%.

The largest ethnic group served in the district is Hispanic, averaging 17.7%. Hispanic populations in our school districts range between 11.3% and 37.1%

9.5% of the families in the district had income in the last 12 months below the poverty level. Although below the state average of 13.4% and the Lake County average of 15.65%, we have three school districts (22.8% - 27.5%) which are higher than both the Indiana and Lake County averages.

Educational attainment in our school districts varies widely. Although the Library district's average of 27.5% holding a Bachelor's Degree or higher is greater than the Lake County average of 22.5% and slightly higher than the state average of 26.5%, we have school districts with graduation rates as low as 76%. The district has an average graduation rate of 92.1% which is higher than the state average of 87.7%.

PUBLIC INPUT SURVEY

In order to obtain feedback from the public about the direction the library should take in the future, LCPL issued a short survey to identify areas for improvement in our current collection and services. (The questions and specific results can be found in Appendix B).

Methodology

The survey was marketed in various ways to capture as large a number of individuals as possible:

- Email blast sent to all adult resident patrons with an email address on file.
- The link was included in our monthly email newsletter.
- 99,763 postcards were mailed to all households in our district with the survey link.
- Link was posted on Facebook.
- Link placed on the homepage of the website.
- Link was available on our InfoStations in-house.
- Paper surveys were available but not used.

Participants were offered an opportunity to win a gas gift card, provided by the Friends, for taking part in the survey.

For questions that relied on a rating scale (Excellent to Poor, or N/A), responses were weighted and averaged, ignoring N/A answers for the purposes of creating the result charts found in Appendix B. "Poor" scores were assigned a 1, "Fair" scores a 2, and so on. (Resulting scores are shown on a scale of 1 to 4 in Appendix B, with the raw response data included below each chart).

Results

4,009 patrons responded to the survey. This was a 112% increase from the previous survey in 2015. The email blast was the most successful method of collecting results, with 49.5% of responses coming from the email link. On November 1st, the day of the blast, 1,954 people completed the survey which was already higher than the total 2015 results of 1,887.

For this survey we endeavored to include as many households as possible so we added a postcard mailing. The 99,763 postcards incorporated 53,292 households with at least one cardholder and 46,381 non-cardholder households. We know that we have space users that have no library card so we wanted to ensure that all residents were aware of the survey. November 15, 2021 the postcards began arriving to households and on November 15th, 1,065 individuals completed the survey which was 26.5% of the results. We considered the additional postcard mailing a resounding success.

Our survey goals were to determine how the LCPL could rebound from the pandemic, what barriers were preventing our communities from fully utilizing their community libraries, and how to develop our outreach services. Over 25% of the respondent gave additional information on Q28 - *If there's anything else you'd like to share with us, please write it here!* Moving forward our plan is to utilize these responses to rebuild our system into a better library and not just return to normal.

94.06% of the respondents were library card-holders but receiving responses from non-cardholders will give us additional data on the barriers or reasons that prevent our communities from using LCPL resources and offerings.

Brief Summary

- Q5 43.12% Never checked out digital items.
- Q6 49.82% plan on checking out mostly physical in the future.
- Q6 29.01% like physical and digital.
- Q6 20.07% will utilize mainly digital.
- Q13 43.41% experience no barriers to library use.
- Q13 28.53% are not using the library as much but have no barriers.
- Q13 12.78% felt they were too busy.
- Q13 9.32% felt unsafe due to COVID.
- Q13 10.84% are accessing books, etc in other ways.
- Q17 52.68% felt we should devote resources to early literacy.
- Q18 Homebound (33.75%) and seniors (24.70%) were the outreach focus.

We feel the survey was successful, informative, and will allow us to succeed with our service priorities.

Complete results in Appendix B

Responses Received

- Email Blast 49.56%
- Postcard Mailing 30.98%
- Monthly Newsletter 6.01%
- Website 10.22%
- Social Media 2.31%
- InfoStations In-House 0.82%
- Newspaper Press Release 0.07%

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The Board of Trustees and Administration believe in maintaining a presence in various civic and community organizations.

LCPL participates and hosts NILBA (Northwest Indiana Library Boards Association) meetings throughout the year and attends and supports the monthly meetings of LCAC (Lake County Advancement Committee) as well as maintaining a presence in local town and county government.

Our branch managers are all members of their local Chambers of Commerce and other service organizations.

Throughout Northwest Indiana library staff meet regularly with their counterparts in reference, circulation, cataloging, youth services, IT, and bookkeeping to share concerns, information, and resources to benefit all residents of Lake County.

The Library partners with its ten public school systems, private and parochial schools, and homeschool associations in the library service district.

Youth services librarians visit schools throughout the year and host school visits in their branches.

LIBRARY PARTNERSHIPS AND MEMBERSHIPS

LCPL will continue to maintain our regional, state, and national partnerships.

- SRCS
- OLCC Worldshare
- Statewide Reciprocal Borrowing Participant
- Northwest Indiana Directors Group
- ADOLPLI Director Group
- Indiana State Library
- Midwest Collaborative for Library Services (MCLS)
- Indiana Library Federation (ILF)
- American Library Association (ALA)
- Public Library Association (PLA)
- Northwest Indiana Counterpart Groups

- Friends of LCPL
- LCPL Foundation
- Books to Bridge the Region
- Northwest Indiana Library Boards Association (NILBA)
- Urban Libraries
- Indiana Chamber of Commerce
- Wellness Council
- Purdue Extension Lake County

PRIORITIES

STAFF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

In an effort to support and encourage quality and professional service to the residents of our community, Lake County Public Library staff are encouraged to attend local, state, and national seminars and conferences. ALA, PLA, and ILF are encouraged and employees are partially reimbursed for their membership dues. We provide financial support to professionals that are working towards their MLS and in the last five years eight employees received their graduate degree through the financial support of LCPL.

The Library Skills Trainer is responsible for the coordination of systemwide training. The Skills Trainer and Human Resources coordinate semi-annual In-Service Days.

LIBRARY POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Policies and procedures are reviewed annually. Updates are made as needed to ensure that the mission and focus of the Library meets the community's needs. Our goal will be to continue to evaluate the ways we serve to ensure that we provide equitable and inclusive library services.

SERVICE PRIORITIES

STRATEGIC GOAL: DIVERSITY

We aim to create an organizational environment in which people from racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse backgrounds are heard, seen, uplifted, and supported. We recognize the importance of building strong emotional intelligence on the path to expanding diversity, equity, and inclusion not only in our work environment, but also as we engage with our communities.

Objectives:

1. Provide multi-year training for staff on skills that foster and support diversity and inclusion in the workplace.
2. Develop a plan to attract, develop, retain, and support a diverse workforce.
3. Plan and implement new services and collections in response to diverse community needs.
4. Continual evaluation to ensure our collections are diverse and inclusive.

STRATEGIC GOAL: OUTREACH

In libraries, outreach is often described as services for those who are infrequent users or nonusers; or as services for those who are traditionally underserved. Our goal is to provide equitable delivery of library services to all people through the development of programs, policies, practices, and behaviors which make the library available to all individuals.

Objectives:

1. Assess community needs for outreach of collections and services to individuals with limitations to access.
2. Develop a comprehensive outreach plan to broaden the library's community impact by engaging underserved audiences.
3. Hire or reorganize staff to include an Outreach Librarian and/or utilize volunteers to help expand services by organizing, delivering and managing outreach services.
4. Investigate outreach using the Libratory or additional equipment.

STRATEGIC GOAL: REBOUND

Rather than restoring a pre-pandemic normal, LCPL has the opportunity to rebuild in alignment with the new needs of our communities,

Objective:

1. Evaluate and determine open building hours at all nine locations.
2. Use the results of the survey to rebuild the services most important to our communities.
3. Review our policy on monetary fines and develop ideas to minimize the impact on patrons.
4. Develop an amnesty program for the 70th anniversary of LCPL.

EVALUATION PROCESS

The Library's Board of Trustees, Library Director, Leadership Team, and staff will be familiar with the goals, objectives, and measures of success outlined in the 2022-2026 Long Range Plan, and will seek to implement future programming, collections, and services to align to its strategic initiatives. The Director will provide updates to the Library Board and staff with accomplishments associated with the Strategic Plan on a regular basis.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The Library provides funding for its Long Range Plan from the following sources:

- Operating fund
- Library Improvement Reserve fund (LIRF)
- Rainy Day fund
- Gift and Memorial funds
- Friends of LCPL
- Library Foundation

STATE STANDARDS

- A long-range plan of service covering between three (3) to five (5) years is required by Indiana Public Library Standards (590 IAC 6-1-5(j) (6)).
- The plan, updates, and revisions must be filed with the Indiana State Library.
Submitted January 2022

At a minimum, the plan shall include the following:

- A) A statement of community needs and goals. [590 IAC 6-1-5(j)(6)] **Page 9**
- B) An assessment of facilities, services, technology, and operations **Appendix E**
- C) Measurable objectives and service responses to the community's needs and goals. [590 IAC 6-1-5(j)(6)] **Pages 18-21**
- D) An ongoing annual evaluation process [590 IAC 6-1-5(j)(6)] **Page 22**
- E) Financial resources and sustainability [590 IAC 6-1-5(j)(6)] Revised 3/28/2017 2 ISL/LDO **Page 23**
- F) An equipment replacement schedule **Appendix E**
- G) A professional development strategy **Page 18**
- H) Collaboration with other public libraries and community partners [590 IAC 6-1-5(j)(6)] a) **Pages 16-17**

APPENDIX

A - Demographics

B - Public Survey Results

C - Employee Survey Results

**D - Assessment of Facilities, Services,
Technology and Operations**

E - Cohorts Survey

F - Library Statistics